

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 768

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 5982

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, CZ, IT

SUBJECT: ITALIAN-CZECH RELATIONS

1. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THE ITALIANS HAVE HAD RATHER CHILLY RELATIONS WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA SINCE THE 1968 EVENTS. RECENTLY, THE FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER FROM PRAGUE VISITED ROME, BUT NONE OF THE PERTINENT MINISTERS WISHED TO RECEIVE HIM. CONSEQUENTLY POLITICAL DIRECTOR GENERAL ROBERTO DUCCI WAS SENT TO PRAGUE APRIL 15 AND 16 AS A COURTESY. THE CZECHS APPARENTLY GAVE HIM THE RED CARPET TREATMENT BECAUSE HE SAW THE FOREIGN MINISTER WITHIN 45 MINUTES OF HIS ARRIVAL. THE FOREIGN MINISTER HARANGUED HIM FOR OVER AN HOUR FOR THE NEED TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. HE POINTED OUT THAT FOREIGN MINISTER CHNOUPEK SAID THAT THE CZECHS HAD ESTABLISHED NORMAL RELATIONS WITH THE FRG AND AUSTRIA, THE TWO MOST DIFFICULT, AND WITH OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES EXCEPT THE UNITED STATES AND ITALY. DUCCI REMARKED THAT THE CZECH AMBASSADOR IN ROME HAD COMMENTED TO HIM THAT HE IS ACCREDITED TO THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT, THE VATICAN (SIC) AND THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND THAT RELATIONS WITH THE LATTER WERE THE WORST OF ALL.

2. DUCCI SAID THAT HE DISCUSSED CSCE AND MBFR WITH THE
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CZECHS (BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY) BUT THAT THE DUBCEK LETTER

SURFACED WHILE HE WAS IN PRAGUE, THEREBY NULLIFYING ANY IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF IMPROVEMENT IN ITALIAN-CZECH RELATIONS.

3. THE DISMISSAL OF SHELEPIN ALSO OCCURRED WHILE DUCCI WAS IN PRAGUE. DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER RUZEK COMMENTED THAT THE DEPARTURE OF SHELEPIN WAS A SIGN THAT BREZHNEV'S POLICY OF DETENTE WAS CONFIRMED. ACCORDING TO THE CZECH, THERE HAD BEEN A DEBATE IN MOSCOW OVER HOW THE SOVIETS SHOULD REACT TO THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS IN THE WEST. THE DEPARTURE OF SHELEPIN IS IN LINE WITH THE DISMISSAL OF SHELEST AND VORONOV IN 1973. THE CZECH POINTED OUT TO DUCCI THAT PONOMAREV IN A SPEECH TO THE SOVIET ARMY CADRES IN FEBRUARY EMPHASIZED FIDELITY TO SOCIALIST IDEALS BUT STRESSED THE NEED FOR DETENTE BECAUSE ANY MISSTEP BY THE SUPERPOWERS COULD RESULT IN NUCLEAR WAR.BEAUDRY

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